



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Johnny Key, Commissioner

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CONTACT: Kimberly Friedman

PHONE: (501) 683-4788

kimberly.friedman@arkansas.gov

Arkansas Maintains ACT Composite Score

LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas' 2015 senior class ACT composite score remained steady at 20.4, a five-year high. The average national composite score for 2015 also remained the same at 21.0.

While the average composite score provides a quick look at college readiness, ACT College Readiness Benchmarks represent the level of achievement required for students to have a 50 percent chance of obtaining a B or higher or about a 75 percent chance of obtaining a C or higher in corresponding credit-bearing first-year college courses.

ACT Benchmark Scores

College Course/Course Area	ACT Test	Benchmark Score
English Composition	English	18
Algebra	Mathematics	22
Social Sciences	Reading	22
Biology	Science	23

Although lower than the national ACT College Readiness average in reading of 46 percent, Arkansas students' reading (social sciences) readiness average increased from 41 percent to 42 percent. While science and math readiness, 32 percent and 35 percent respectively, remained the same, Arkansas' English readiness decreased from 63 percent to 62 percent.

The greatest gaps between Arkansas and the national average exist in math and science. Thirty-two

percent of Arkansas students reached the science benchmark compared to 38 percent in the nation. Thirty-five percent of Arkansas students met the mathematics benchmark compared to 42 percent in the nation. Science scores are expected to improve over time as the state will begin assessing students in science in grades three through 10 compared to previous years when only grades five, seven and 10 were assessed with the Benchmark or End of Course exams. As teachers stay the course with rigorous mathematical standards and practices, students are expected to improve in that area as well.

When asked what the state can do to improve ACT scores, Dr. Debbie Jones, assistant commissioner of Learning Services, commented, “Academic improvement will require a partnership between the schools and families. If students want to improve ACT scores, they must attend school regularly beginning in the early years and must commit to rigorous core classes every year of their high school career. Teachers must continue to teach the rigorous standards of the state and provide quality instruction and quality assignments.”

A higher percentage of 2015 Arkansas high school graduates took the ACT than the national average.

“That means that in Arkansas we are reaching more potential first-generation college students,” ADE Commissioner Johnny Key said. “Our work in mathematics and the sciences will not only improve the state’s composite score but also increase higher-paying job opportunities upon graduation.”

In Arkansas, 93 percent (or 26,995 students) of the 2015 graduating class took the ACT, which is significantly higher than the national average of 59 percent (1,924,436).

The number of students taking the ACT will only continue to grow in Arkansas. During the 2015-16 school year, Arkansas will administer the ACT statewide, with all 11th-grade students having the option of taking the ACT for free.

“The decision to offer the test statewide at no cost to districts and parents gives all students the opportunity to take the college-entrance exam, thus, breaking down a significant barrier to access to colleges and universities,” Jones said. “Statewide administration of the ACT is often associated with increases in post-secondary enrollment among low-income students.”

In all content areas students score higher on ACT College Readiness Benchmark scores when they take courses in the Core or More, which includes four or more years of English and three or more years each in math, social studies and natural science.

To see Arkansas’ results, go to <http://www.act.org/research/policymakers/cccr15/index.html>.

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